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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 PORT AU PRINCE 000731

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SUBJECT: HAITIAN NATIONAL POLICE - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Classified By: Charge Thomas C. Tighe, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following is a brief overview of progress made by the Haitian National Police in the past two years and a summary of various perspectives on where the HNP should go in the future. This report represents the recommendations and analysis of the first full-time NAS Director, at the end of a two-year tour in Haiti. End summary.

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Then and Now  
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¶2. (C) The Haitian National Police (HNP) came into existence in 1995, when the Haitian military was decommissioned. The HNP is the only national security force in Haiti and includes all police units, the prison system, the Coast Guard and the fire department. In 2004 the HNP underwent radical changes, with its numbers being reduced to less than 3000 after many of the former military (FADH) were purged from its ranks. It was still a force feared and hated by the population, viewed as the corrupt personal enforcement arm of certain powerful individuals. Since that time, the HNP, with the strong support of and pressure from the international community, has made substantial progress in fielding a professional police force that is no longer feared by the population. Polls indicate that the HNP is now the most respected Government of Haiti (GOH) entity and number two after the Catholic Church overall.

¶3. (U) HNP strength will stand at approximately 10,000 officers with the scheduled graduation on August 18 of the latest class of 475 cadets. That is still far short of the internationally-agreed goal of 14,000 HNP by the end of 2011 to extend control to all areas of the country. Even that goal is considered minimal, with 20,000 being a truer measure of what is needed to effectively police all of Haiti. Substantial progress has been made on implementation of the five-year reform plan agreed with the UN Stabilization Mission for Haiti (MINUSTAH) with support from international donors. The U.S. remains the primary donor to the HNP, followed by Canada. In the past five years, including support to the U.S. contingent to MINUSTAH, the USG has

invested over 75 million USD in peace and security in Haiti.

14. (C) The past two years have seen a marked improvement in the performance of the HNP as well as the population's perceptions of the police, but much remains to be done. Political will is sometimes lacking, budget shortfalls hamper the HNP, and political in-fighting has occasionally stalled progress for weeks or months. President Preval has listed the fight against corruption and drug trafficking as two of his main priorities, but resources devoted to the HNP have not matched that rhetoric. Like most GOH entities, the HNP is often subject to the personal priorities of high level officials, including the Director General, that may not match the needs of the organization or the population.

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What Next - Various Perspectives  
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15. (C) NAS Director has discussed the future of the HNP with various actors in the past few weeks, including the HNP leadership, the Minister of Justice and MINUSTAH. Each has its own vision of the way forward but some constants emerged: the need to continue to implement the Reform Plan and to begin development of the next five-year plan; the need for additional resources within the GOH to be devoted to the HNP; the need to meet the 14,000 goal; and the need for political will to address drug trafficking and its accompanying corruption, which threaten hard-fought gains.

16. (C) Minister of Justice: The MOJ is heavily focused on judicial reform, with much less attention paid to the HNP. He has reestablished the DG in control of the HNP after a power struggle for control of the HNP with the Secretary of

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State for Public Security under the previous MOJ. That allows the DG to take action as he sees fit in many cases, but also means that there has been little visible high level support from the MOJ to address the budgetary needs of the HNP. The MOJ supported the reappointment of the DG for another three-year term, which the President has agreed to and confirmation is awaiting only formal Senate approval. The MOJ sees the HNP priorities as the need to adequately rehabilitate and equip the HNP facilities in the Departments (political subdivisions of the country) and to expand prison capacity to address human rights concerns about overcrowded conditions. His other priorities are not related directly to the HNP but will have a potentially positive impact, including reforming the judiciary to eliminate corruption and non-performing or incompetent judges, and the need to effectively process cases to avoid long-term pretrial detention that often results in cases being dismissed.

17. (C) HNP Director General: The DG's priorities include improvement of rural policing facilities, border control, increased night patrols, expansion of Academy training both for new and veteran officers, construction of a new headquarters and HNP-dedicated medical facilities and expansion of the BLTS counternarcotics unit beyond the capital area. Long-term priorities include possible air capability, environmental policing and an additional Coast Guard base in the South at Jacmel. In spite of this list, the DG is in fact very focused on operational needs such as equipment in the metropolitan area and pays little attention to the needs of what he considers less than full police units such as the Coast Guard and the Prison Administration Directorate (DAP). Both of those entities suffer from a severe lack of resources in spite of what may be written into the budget and no real direction from the HNP higher command structure as to how to operate. The Coast Guard survives essentially on the U.S. and Canada's donations and support, and has the advantage of having some knowledgeable former Navy officers in charge. The DAP does not, however, have those relative advantages to counteract its lower status within the HNP.

18. (C) MINUSTAH: The Deputy Police Commissioner for Development (protect), who works very closely with the U.S. on HNP reform, shared his vision of HNP needs and future projects. In his view, the priorities are the need for a new headquarters complex that would allow for full control of the HNP nationwide (including communications), a fleet maintenance and management facility to deal with the growing vehicle fleet, the need to fully address training needs, including revision of curriculum at the current HNP basic training academy and the construction of an advanced training academy (promised by Canada for over three years), long-term planning expertise, development of a permanent continuous recruitment system, and the desperate need to address budgetary and procurement issues that have resulted in the HNP having to put new officers on the streets without siearms or ammunition. The lack of a clear promtion system is also hindering the HNP's ability o staff up certain units such as the BLTS with cpable experienced officers vs. new recruits.

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INL/NAS programs - what worked; what remains to be done  
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19. (C) In spite of the challenges encountered in Haiti daily, the HNP has made great progress based in large part on the support of the USG. The increase in the size of the HNP is due directly to the INL/NAS support to the HNP Academy and each graduating class since 2005. INL/NAS provide equipment, duty gear, uniforms, classroom materials and food supplements to each class as well as special gear such as ATVs, motorcycles or riot gear depending on the planned deployment of the new officers and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Without such support, the HNP would field even fewer new officers annually, if any at all. In the past year, the U.S., in collaboration with Canada, has expanded the capacity of the Academy to allow for staggered

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classes, increasing its potential to graduate at least 2500 cadets annually. The inability of the HNP to fully implement a continuous recruitment system (with MINUSTAH support) has not allowed it to take full advantage of the facilities to date but progress is being made, with 1200 cadets graduating in 2009. The USG should continue to push the HNP to formalize this process.

110. (C) Haiti's anti-money laundering program is now considered a model for the Caribbean region, thanks to a highly successful program funded by INL/NAS. The U.S. Treasury Office of Technical Assistance provides advisors who visit monthly to train and mentor the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU known as UCREF in Haiti) and the HNP Financial Crimes Unit (BAFE) and provide technical assistance on analysis and investigation of financial crimes related to money laundering, drug trafficking and corruption. That program assisted the GOH in establishing an Asset Forfeiture Management Fund to deal with over 26 million USD in property and assets seized since October 2008. Those seizures are a direct result of cooperation with the USG that resulted in a decision by the GOH to move on forfeiture of assets of convicted drug traffickers based on US convictions. Since there are virutally no convictions of drug traffickers in Haiti, this innovative approach has allowed the GOH to benefit from the illegally obtained assets while sending a strong message to traffickers that their assets are no longer safe in Haiti. INL/NAS will continue to support this program at least through 2011 and will expand training under this program in FY2010. In the coming yar, INL/NAS (through a combination of INCLE and ESF funds) will also support the installation, training and maintenance of UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) software and computer equipment at both UCREF and BAFE to improve the ability to proactively pursue suspected traffickers through financial analysis and investigations.

¶11. (C) Support for the Haitian Coast Guard (HCG) from the Military Liaison Office (MLO) and NAS has enabled the HCG to develop in spite of its limited resources. Additional boats have been acquired and training is provided regularly, resulting in one of the better trained units of the HNP. INL/NAS renovation/construction of the HCG base at Cap Haitien and on-going provision of food and fuel have allowed the HCG to return to limited patrols of the northern coast, the major departure point for smuggling operations of all types of contraband and migrants. Construction of an additional small HCG base at Port de Paix on the northwest coast using Merida funding will further expand their reach. However, the HCG still lacks sufficient boats with half of their small fleet inoperable at any time. GOH commitments to expand the HCG by the addition of 65 officers (they currently have 105) have not yet come to fruition. If the additional officers materialize, training and housing them will remain a problem as the MINUSTAH Sri Lankan military contingent currently occupy half of the HCG Killick base in Port au Prince, including the portion containing the pool needed for training purposes. The USG should push MINUSTAH to relocate that contingent to allow for expansion of the HCG. With expanded capabilities to patrol its coasts, the HCG has the potential to become a major factor in interdiction of illegal narcotics flowing through Haiti.

¶12. (C) The security component of the Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI) was vital in helping the HNP maintain the hard won stability that the Brazilian Battalion brought to Cite Soleil starting in 2007. Construction of a new police station in a neighborhood still considered a security risk (although much improved over 2006) presented unique challenges for the contractors and for NAS personnel attempting to oversee the projects. The need for additional security and RSO permission to visit the site were just some of the complications encountered. The lessons learned about such construction as well as how to introduce community policing concepts into such long-neglected slum communities will prove useful in any follow-on programs of this type in other hot spot areas. The lack of sufficient numbers of HNP assigned to the area remains an on-going concern that the USG

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will need to continue to press with the HNP DG. The success of the HSI portion of the Haiti INL/NAS program came at a steep price for NAS, requiring major time commitments of the sole police advisor and the director at a time when the core program was also expanding and the section had one advisor position vacant for over a year. Any future such endeavors need to build in appropriate additional NAS staffing to deal with the increased work load without threatening to slow or stop parts of the bilateral program.

¶13. (C) The prison system in Haiti remains a looming human rights disaster. The main Men's Penitentiary in Port au Prince holds over 4000 detainees, in a facility built for 600 by international standards. 88 percent of those held are still in pre-trial detention. With an abysmal conviction rate of just three percent, chances are high that most of those arrested will be released, but that process can take months. Some prisoners are held for longer than their potential sentences. The overcrowding and the frequent release of even major felons has a negative impact on morale throughout the HNP. Arrests in 2008 rose to 15,538 from just 6,444 in 2006 but the prison system and the courts have not kept pace with the improved enforcement actions of the HNP. Judicial reform is a priority for the MOJ, but it has had virtually no impact on the prison population or the conviction rate. The U.S. and Canada are the only donors working in the corrections area. INL/NAS recently completed the construction of an isolation ward and renovation of the infirmary in the men's penitentiary but bandaied measures are almost futile under such conditions. INL/NAS plans to construct a new women's prison have been stalled for over a year as the GOH has not identified the final site for

construction. NAS believes they may finally be close to a decision, using one of the properties forfeited by a convicted drug trafficker. However, realistically speaking, improvements in the prison system will not truly happen until the judicial system is fixed so that cases are promptly and appropriately adjudicated. Given the prison system's status as a poor stepchild of the HNP, major improvements will not happen until the GOH demonstrates political will to address the issue.

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Drug Trafficking - the 800 pound gorilla in the room  
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¶14. (C) President Preval has repeatedly publicly listed the fight against drug trafficking as one of his top priorities, along with combating corruption. INL/NAS, DEA and MLO all support programs or operations designed to interdict or improve the HNP ability to interdict narcotics being trafficked through Haiti. Haiti is on the Majors List annually as a transit country, a status that they deplore, blame on U.S. demand and yet do not aggressively address internally. Clandestine air flights into Haiti are increasing and maritime drops also continue, often with Jamaican 'guns for ganga' ties. To date, Haiti has not had much of a problem with domestic substance abuse (mostly some marijuana) but anecdotal evidence indicates that is changing.

Failure to address growing domestic demand and abuse may allow such problems to get out of control before the GOH takes serious notice. INL/NAS and DEA support the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) and the counternarcotics unit (BLTS) as well as the BAFE as stated above. However, with just 45 officers assigned to the BLTS, all based in Port au Prince, and lacking such basic resources as vehicles, they are losing the fight against the drug traffickers who are infinitely better equipped to do their business. Corruption plays a big role in the drug trade as well, with almost all loads interdicted being escorted or transported by HNP officers. The corruption extends into the prosecutors and judges offices as well. The only way to possibly make a dent in that trade is to expand the BLTS with vetted officers and base them on the Southern and Northern coasts as well as in the capital. Left unchecked, the accompanying corruption and erosion of societal norms threaten political stability. Suspected drug traffickers already serve in Parliament, enjoying immunity from prosecution. A major fugitive wanted

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for cocaine smuggling in the U.S. also tried to run in recent Senate elections but was disqualified on other grounds. One of his goals in seeking election was precisely to gain immunity. Corruption within the HNP ranks also appears to be at the root of why several operations to arrest him have failed. With the expansion of the BLTS, the USG will need to step up to help provide the needed equipment and infrastructure to allow them to effectively operate in more than one location simultaneously. Discussions of basing helicopters in Haiti to assist in the interdiction effort are premature and need to be adapted to Haitian reality and timed accordingly to be of greatest effectiveness. With no HNP air capability and limited personnel, a more productive and cost-effective approach would be to provide support by helicopters based elsewhere and deployed in support of specific operations coordinated through Embassy colleagues in country.

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So what's next?  
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¶15. (C) Comment: Haiti is on the cusp of taking up a bigger role in the Caribbean region. However, the nations in the region also need to be encouraged to invite Haiti to participate and to develop stronger bilateral and regional links. The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative has the potential to provide an excellent platform for moving such



regional integration forward. In addition, it is imperative that Haiti and the Dominican Republic be considered jointly when dealing with such issues as drug trafficking. NASS in Haiti and in the DR have already collaborated on a joint cross border training program under Merida to improve communication and cooperation at the major border crossing points. A Hispaniola approach is needed to truly stop drug transit through the island as well as to combat other transnational crimes.

¶16. (C) In spite of the problems mentioned above, the USG, including all parts of State, needs to recognize that the HNP has made progress, that the USG has reliable partners in parts of and in the upper command structure of the organization and that the HNP today is a professional national police force that is moving toward controlling its national territory. State should encourage all USG entities to deal with Haiti as the sovereign nation it is, recognizing the realities on the ground. Donors can no longer impose their plans on the GOH but must engage them as partners. Haiti must be dealt with as it exists, not as the stereotypical image of the past. Some USG entities, for example, base their interactions (or lack thereof) with Haiti on dated security assessments from 2006 or 2007. Haiti of 2009 is not the Haiti of even two years ago and continued progress can be achieved by building on their strengths while applying pressure to improve their weaknesses. The expansion and success of the INL/NAS program in the past two years is proof that this can happen and much can be achieved in spite of the difficult challenges and circumstances that may exist.

TIGHE